

*Oral Questions***CITIZENS' FORUM ON CANADA'S FUTURE**

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): When this government created the Spicer commission, it did so in an apparent attempt to elicit the opinions of Canadian citizens and to move away from the closed door, secretive approach that characterized previous constitutional discussions.

Just last week in my riding of Nipissing, we learned that commission moderators can ban the media if they so desire under the guise of making the participants feel more comfortable. The public is footing the bill for this forum, the most expensive in Canadian history, yet the media can be prohibited from covering and publicizing the proceedings. Wasn't the purpose of this forum to listen to what Canadians have to say and to engage in dialogue with one another?

Perhaps this is why the government suffers the image problem it has. If the people want to be heard, they will be, regardless of who is present. It is not by banning media from public hearings that encourages citizens to speak up. On the contrary, debate will be enhanced when other people see and hear what their fellow citizens have to say.

When this commission was created, it was termed the biggest exercise in democracy. They should have called it "demockery". What was supposed to be a country-wide public opinion search has become the government's \$27 million and counting patronage fund.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound—Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian, and as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I was fortunate this past Sunday morning to have been in Halifax with many of my colleagues who, along with His Excellency the Governor General, the Right Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn, the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, the Minister of National Defence, Bill McKnight, and the Associate Minister of National Defence, Mary Collins, welcomed home from the Persian Gulf 950 Canadian forces personnel who served on board HMCS *Athabaskan*, HMCS *Terra Nova* and HMCS *Protecteur*.

I felt equal pride later in the day when I joined a reception party at CFB Uplands to officially greet 90 of our Canadian forces personnel flown in from Germany en route from the Persian Gulf.

In both situations, for the loved ones of these courageous men and women, fear and uncertainty gave way Sunday to tears of joy. Beyond a doubt, we as Canadians are extremely proud and thankful for their contribution to peace.

Governor General Hnatyshyn summed up admirably the feelings of all Canadians toward all our returning personnel when he said Sunday to the waiting families in Halifax that their loved ones: "remind us that Canada is blessed with skilled and courageous service men and women who are prepared to defend peace whenever and wherever it is endangered".

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FORESTRY

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, today the Government of Canada and the Canadian Institute of Forestry are sponsoring a parliamentary forum to discuss forestry and its issues across this country.

As well today, the Minister of Forestry tabled his first annual report on the state of our forests. Our forests need attention now from this government. The same government that talks about supporting our forest community is at the same time unwilling to stand up to the American administration and terminate the softwood lumber memorandum of understanding that is crippling our forest industry.

Hundreds of communities are dependent on the forests for their survival. We need some action now.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today the Conference Board of Canada released its most recent report which said: "The latest federal